



01 DEVON/DORSET THE UNDERCLIFFS



▶ Distance: 7¼ miles/11.6km ▶ Time: 3½ hours ▶ Grade: Moderate

SEE
FEATURE
ON PAGE 50

Pockets of chalk grassland
cling on in the Undercliff.



PHOTO: TOM BAILEY



CHOSEN BY...

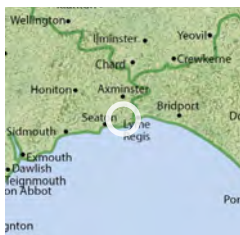
PHILIP THOMAS

A tropical rainforest on the south coast of England? Not quite, but with a warm and humid microclimate nurturing a carpet of ferns and orchids beneath a leafy canopy, you'd be forgiven for thinking the Undercliffs between Axmouth and Lyme Regis are somewhere more exotic. This sheltered sun-trap and wooded wilderness by the sea is also one of Britain's most geomorphologically active coastlines – a band of folds and troughs forever being shaped and reshaped by landslips. The cliffs are so unstable in places, the South West Coast Path has recently been re-routed over 'Goat

Island', opening up a new path over this previously untrodden pocket of grassland, elevated above the canopy. Following the trail as it delves into the Undercliff, you'll need a sense of adventure (this is the Jurassic Coast after all). Traces of an agricultural past survive in the shade, reclaimed by nature in what is now a national reserve. Crossing from Devon into Dorset, you emerge from this primordial promenade at the seaside resort of Lyme Regis, where you can round off a walk in the jungle with fish and chips on the seafront.

1 Start
From the car park walk past tram station and supermarket,

PLAN YOUR WALK



ROUTE

Start/parking Harbour Road Car Park, Seaton, EX12 2WD, grid ref SY246902. Long stay also available in Lyme Regis

Is it for me? Follows well-marked SWCP along cliff-top paths and through rough, muddy, undulating coastal woodland.

Stiles None

PLANNING

Nearest towns
Seaton & Lyme Regis

Refreshments
None on route, various in Seaton & Lyme Regis

Public toilets
Seaton & Lyme Regis

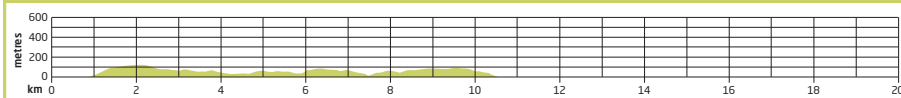
Public transport X52 or 9A (www.jurassiccoast.org/discover/travel-information)

Maps OS Explorer 116; Landranger 193

turning L onto Harbour Road, continuing across the bridge over the river. As the road bends towards Axmouth, turn



GRADIENT PROFILE



01 DEVON/DORSET THE UNDERCLIFFS

► OS Explorer map 116 ► Buy maps at: ordnancesurvey.co.uk/shop



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R up a lane to Axe Cliff Golf Course and pick up the route of the South West Coast Path (SWCP). Cross the Golf Course to a farm track 'Barn Close Lane' and soon (after 350m) turn R at the sign for the SWCP (estimating 3-4 hrs to Lyme Regis) towards clifftop.

2 1½ miles/2.4km
SWCP swings L above the above the mangle of trees and rock below, but rather than dropping down below Bindon Cliffs, it now dips into the void separating 'Goat Island' from the main cliff, and climbs back out again on a new route over the top. From here you can peer down into the jungle below, and enjoy your clearest view over the waters of Lyme Bay towards Portland. After crossing this 'island' of chalk grassland, the SWCP dips down

again into the trees to re-join its original course through the undercliff.

3 2½ miles/4km
In places, the Undercliff is a maze of rock cavities, where the cliffs have splintered, and somehow a trail has been forged through the chalk and trees. Somewhere hiding in the undercliff there's a stone sheep dip to uncover, looking like the remains of a lost civilisation. Further on, you'll encounter the ruin of cottage and later the chimney of a pumping station on the edge of the Rousden Estate. For your own safety (and so as not to disturb the wildlife that lives here), don't be tempted to stray far from the SWCP on the many faint but misleading paths that disappear into the trees.

4 6½ miles/10km
Eventually emerging from the trees by Underhill Farm, where soon after you'll cross the Devon/Dorset border, the SWCP swings R atop the cliff towards Lyme Regis Harbour. After taking the steep steps down to the harbour, make time to see the Cobb (of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* fame) and turn L to follow SWCP along the promenade (Marine Parade). From Cobb Gate you can catch a bus back to Seaton. **CW**

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